



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Abbi Pierce
Division of Disease Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: apierce@nd.gov

National Infant Immunization Week Observed in North Dakota
Department of Health Reminds Parents of the Importance of Vaccinating Their Children

Bismarck, N.D. – In observance of National Infant Immunization Week April 25 through May 2, 2009, the North Dakota Department of Health is reminding parents of the importance of vaccinating their children, according to State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

National Infant Immunization Week emphasizes the need to fully immunize children 24 months and younger against 14 vaccine-preventable diseases.

Each year, more than 8,500 children are born in North Dakota, and each is in need of protection from diseases that can be prevented through immunization. Many of today's parents have never seen the types of disease that modern immunizations prevent; however, these illnesses are serious and still pose a threat. Immunizations are the best way for parents to protect the health of their children for a lifetime.

“Outstanding progress has been made in immunization coverage rates for children, with coverage at the highest level ever recorded for most vaccines,” Dwelle said. “However, there is still much work to be done. About 20 percent of children ages 19 months to 35 months are not up-to-date for recommended vaccines. It’s important that parents check their children’s immunization records and get them caught up on their vaccinations if they are behind.”

Pertussis, also called whooping cough, is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable disease that has seen a substantial increase in reported cases among children in recent years. For example, 757 cases of whooping cough were reported in North Dakota in 2004. In 2008, 25 cases were reported. So far this year, 12 cases have been reported, which may indicate a possible increase in cases. The diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine can protect against whooping cough;

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

however, the rate for receiving the fourth dose of the vaccine, which is routinely given to children between the ages of 12 month and 18 months, lags behind other vaccination rates in North Dakota.

“It’s important to make sure children have received all recommended doses of all recommended vaccines,” Dwelle said. “That’s one of the best ways for parents to ensure their children grow up healthy and strong.”

For more information about National Infant Immunization Week or where to get immunizations for your children, contact Abbi Pierce, immunization surveillance coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2180 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/immunize.

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